



Metro Bank Response to the 'Access to Banking' Inquiry

Metro Bank, the revolution in British banking, welcomes this opportunity to respond to the Committee's ongoing inquiry into 'Access to Banking' in Wales.

As the first new high street bank to operate in the UK for more than 100-years, built on the simple maxim that customers deserve the best in service and convenience, we recognise better than most the underlying challenges facing the sector, from high street competition, to the crucial role of SME financing for local communities, and the importance of face-to-face customer service in an increasingly digital world.

As such, please find below our inquiry response, with further information about Metro Bank located at the base of this submission.

Summary

- Metro Bank will bring its award-winning customer service to Wales for the first-time, with two new stores set to open in the city.
- These new stores will not only increase access to banking within Wales through increased competition, but also directly create around 50 new jobs and apprenticeships.
- Metro Bank's business proposition is focused on customer service, with the continued existence of physical bank stores on high streets a pillar of our customer development strategy.
- Metro Bank has outlined eight core commitments, all focused-on SME accessibility and inclusion, as part of our winning bid for the Capability & Innovation (C&I) funding.
- As the original 'challenger bank', the growth of competition in the banking sector is one we have led and continue to be a part of. This growth has been of benefit to consumers by increasing choice and flexibility.

Consultation Scope

1. The current position regarding access to banking services in Wales, to include issues relating to financial inclusion and digital inclusion.

Just eight years since we opened the doors to our first store in central London, we have brought the banking revolution to 66 communities, welcomed 1.6 million accounts and created 3,900 jobs throughout the UK.

As we continue to grow, we will open more stores across the UK – many of which are already in advanced planning stages or under construction – and create new offerings to our existing and new customer base. Within this, we are delighted to inform the Committee that Metro Bank will be bringing its award-winning service and community banking experience to Wales for the first-time.

We plan to have a store presence in Cardiff city centre, as well as on the Newport Road, benefiting Welsh consumers and businesses alike. We will announce further details as and when timing allows. These new stores will not only increase access to banking within Wales through increased competition, but also directly create around 50 new jobs and apprenticeships in the city.

With this announcement, we plan on enhancing banking services and inclusion – both financial and digital – in Wales through our focus on excellent customer service. In February of this year, we were extremely proud to secure first place for our personal current account service in the Competition and Market Authority's (CMA) bi-annual service quality survey. We were also delighted to come second for business current account services – a marker of our strength across both fields.

Alongside our existing growth plans in Wales and the South of England, we have also made a commitment to open a further thirty new stores in the North of England by 2025. This commitment is part of Metro Bank's efforts to inject much needed competition into the small business banking market following the £120 million funding we were awarded from the C&I Fund, part of the Williams & Glyn Alternative Remedies Package. As a result we will be creating more than 750 new jobs and over 100 apprenticeships across the UK.

As part of this successful bid, we promised to build a range of game-changing digital capabilities to help SMEs thrive. These capabilities include:

- ✓ Launching an AI led insights app to help SMEs understand their cash flow;
- ✓ Launching a mobile cash pick-up and drop-off service to better accommodate time poor SMEs;
- ✓ Introducing a complete end-to-end journey to opening a business bank account online, so that SMEs everywhere can benefit from banking with Metro Bank;
- ✓ Enabling all-in-one business services through a single platform which will include bookkeeping, invoicing, and business receipt management; and
- ✓ Launching the first end-to-end payments and accounts receivable solution which reconciles with cloud services – saving time and improving efficiency.

It is through commitments and initiatives such as these that Metro Bank will continue to offer first class customer service to all our current and future customers in Wales. Further information of our commitments can be viewed online at: www.bcr-ltd.com.

2. The variety of ways in which branch closures and access to free ATMs can affect local communities (for instance the impacts from a business, tourism, social, demographic and regeneration perspective).

Metro Bank is keenly aware of the impact local bank branches have on the communities in which they operate. That is why, as an ongoing business priority for us, we are actively reversing the current industry trend of bank closures and are rolling out new stores across the country.

As we have announced, we plan to open two new stores in Wales. Our Welsh presence will allow us to better support communities and businesses by employing around 50 staff and investing in local apprenticeship programmes.

We will also continue to offer many of our free initiatives, which include the financial education programme, Money Zone, to schools and youth groups in the area. This training is approved by the National Curriculum and is provided through classroom and store-based sessions, it has already successfully supported more than 100,000 children across the UK with their financial literacy.

3. To understand the potential process, benefits and challenges involved with establishing a community bank with multiple branches in Wales.

As the first new high street bank in over 100 years, Metro Bank understands the inherent challenges in establishing a new banking presence within the UK. However, despite growing competition and greater choice for consumers, the sector is still largely dominated by the big-five banks. In principle, we welcome any proposal, including new Welsh community bank branches, which aims to further increase customer choice but would state that the range of choices currently available to customers looking to switch banking provider has never been greater.

Furthermore, the recent C&I fund which Metro Bank successfully bid for and consequently won is aimed solely at boosting competition in the SME finance sector and will go a long way to improving choice and lending to business owners in Wales and beyond.

About Metro Bank



Metro Bank is the revolution in British banking. It is celebrated for its exceptional customer experience and its trusted products. In 2017 it was awarded 'Most Trusted Financial Provider' at the Moneywise Customer Service Awards, 'Best Financial Provider' at the Evening Standard 2017 Business Awards and 'Bank of the Year' at the City A.M. Awards in 2016.

In 2019 it celebrated being ranked in the top-five for qualifying business and personal account services in the CMA survey into banking service quality – achieving first place for personal current accounts (83% customer satisfaction) and second in business current accounts (with 71% satisfaction).

Offering retail, business, commercial and private banking services, Metro Bank prides itself on using technology to give customers the choice to bank however, whenever, and wherever they choose. Whether that's through its growing network of stores open seven days a week, from early in the morning to late at night, 362 days a year; on the phone through its UK-based 24/7 contact centres manned by people not machines; or online through its internet banking or award-winning mobile app.

The bank employs over 3,900 staff and is headquartered in Holborn, London.

Contact information

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